

CIA Probed in Alleged Arms Shipments

Reports Claim Agency Was Involved in Arkansas-Nicaragua Drug Swaps

By Susan Schmidt
Washington Post Staff Writer

The CIA's inspector general is investigating claims that U.S. intelligence agencies were involved in illegal arms shipments and drug smuggling at an isolated airstrip in Mena, Ark., during the years Bill Clinton was governor.

A spokesman for the CIA said Inspector General Frederick P. Hitz is preparing a report on allegations that the CIA was involved in arms shipments from Mena to the Nicaraguan rebels during the 1980s, and that pilots hired by the agency

brought back large shipments of cocaine.

CIA spokesman Mark Mansfield said the inspector general will report on possible contacts between the agency and Arkansas state officials during the 1980s. His report also will deal with allegations that the CIA attempted to influence or curtail law enforcement investigations of Mena.

Hitz was asked to investigate the Mena airport by CIA Director John M. Deutch, who was acting on a request from House Banking Committee Chairman Jim Leach (R-Iowa). Leach's panel is looking into

the possible laundering of drug money generated at Mena.

Leach's Banking Committee staff has been looking a variety of claims about Mena emanating from a collection of Arkansas law enforcement officials and various figures operating in the shadowy underworld on contract with intelligence agencies.

One congressional investigator likened sorting through the allegations to being trapped in "a hall of mirrors."

Congressional sources said Leach made the request to the CIA about six months ago and expects a

report from Hitz in late summer or early fall.

The latest Mena claims are contained in "Boy Clinton," a book by American Spectator Editor R. Emmett Tyrrell published this week. In it, Tyrrell asserts that Clinton knew about CIA operations and cocaine smuggling at Mena.

He cites as sources Arkansas state troopers, including one on the governor's security detail who says he was also a contract employee for the CIA during the mid-1980s and informed Clinton of what was going on at Mena.

Clinton has said he had nothing to do with any activities at Mena. "Mena is the darkest backwater of the right wing conspiracy industry," said White House spokesman Mark Fabiani. "The allegations are as bizarre as they are false."